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# Master Metals reaches deal over exposing workers to lead

By **SANDRA LIVINGSTON**

PLAIN DEALER REPORTER

Master Metals Inc. will pay \$250,000 in penalties for overexposing its workers to lead under a proposed settlement with the Department of Labor and the United Steelworkers of America.

Company officials could not be reached for comment yesterday.

The agreement would settle citations the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration issued in 1990 charging that the secondary lead-smelting company should pay \$422,000 for failing to remove workers with excessive lead in their blood and for violating other worker-health regulations.

At the time, the danger at the company on W. 3rd St. was considered so great that a federal judge ordered the removal of workers whose lead levels were higher than allowed under fed-

eral law. That was most of the company's 40 workers, several of whom had lead levels double the federal standard.

The removal followed nearly a decade of OSHA efforts to bring the company into compliance with federal laws. Master Metals recovers lead from scrap and other products and then sells it.

Excessive exposure to lead can cause kidney damage, anemia, neurological damage and reproductive damage.

The settlement requires the company to remove affected workers from the job when necessary and to provide workers with protective gear and a lunchroom free of excessive airborne lead.

The company also must properly monitor workers' lead levels and give them results of blood tests.

OSHA found in 1990 that employ-

ees with high lead levels were not given their test results within five days nor told of their rights to be removed if their lead levels were excessive.

The agreement states that nothing in the settlement is an admission by the company of guilt for any of the allegations.

Meanwhile, the company has built a new lunchroom and stated in the agreement that conditions in the citations have been abated.

During the next year, the company also must submit blood-test results to OSHA and the union each month.

Separately, a sentencing hearing is still pending for Master Metals President Douglas Mickey, who has pleaded guilty to making false statements to OSHA about lead levels in his workers' blood. The government had charged that Mickey knew in 46 instances that employees' blood-lead levels were higher than reported to OSHA.